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Abstract

Online Narcotics Anonymous:

An Option for Addressing Methamphetamine Use Disorder

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Objective: Although 11% of all US drug overdose deaths have been attributed to methamphetamine, there are limited treatments for it that have a substantial impact on clinical outcomes. Online access to the community-based fellowship Narcotics Anonymous (NA) may offer support for remission for some persons with methamphetamine use disorder (MUD). Our objective was to characterize the role that online NA participation can play in remission of MUD.

Methods: Persons who accessed a website for participating in online NA meetings were offered the option of participating in an anonymous, structured survey consisting of items related to their clinical status, substance use, and prior experience with the website. Responses of those who designated their primary drug problem as methamphetamine were analyzed.

Results: Of the 1645 respondents who accessed the NA online meeting site in 2023, 356 indicated that methamphetamine was their principal drug problem. Levels of remission by respondents who reported turning to the website primarily for MUD were analyzed for those: (1) new to the online site (44%), (2) longtime abstinent (mean 2.3 y), or (3) still using methamphetamine (13%). Respondents' subjective experiences, such as their belief in the 12 Steps, spiritual awakening, and level of relief provided from distress, were also associated with remission.

Conclusions: Online NA meetings can provide support for promoting abstinence for some persons with MUD, and can be studied relative to their clinical status. Such meetings can therefore be useful for professional referral, and their function and utility merit further investigation.